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Quadrennial report for the period 2006-2010 submitted by non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council through the Secretary-General pursuant to Council resolution 1996/31

Note by the Secretary-General

The Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations at its 2010 regular session requested Plan International, an organization on the Roster since 1981, to submit a report on its activities at the 2011 regular session of the Committee.

The report is being submitted in accordance with paragraph 61 (c) of Council resolution 1996/31.

Contents

Page

Plan International 2

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Plan International

Roster, 1981

I. Introduction

Founded over 70 years ago, Plan International is one of the oldest and largest child rights development organizations in the world. In total, the organization works in 48 developing countries across Africa, Asia and the Americas, supported by 18 fundraising offices. There are also liaison offices in Brussels and Geneva, with another office planned for New York. The organization is independent, with no religious, political or governmental affiliations.

A. Aims and purposes of the organization

The vision of the organization is of a world in which all children realize their full potential in societies that respect people's rights and dignity. The child-centred community development approach is the organization's translation of this vision into the practice of international development. The approach is rights-based. It is not limited to any technical sector of development and it is not confined by ideological or religious boundaries. It relies on the collective action of civil society to generate the empowerment of children to realize their potential. Although the term implies a focus on the community, the approach incorporates an understanding that meaningful changes in the lives of children require social, political, economic and cultural changes at many levels, transcending community and even national boundaries.

Other characteristics of the approach are its temporal horizons. The focus on the structural causes of child poverty and the violations of children's rights implies a strategy with a long horizon. The expected outcomes in terms of policy changes, changes in political will, changes in public attitudes and systemic changes in service delivery require a long and steady engagement. At the same time, the manifestations and immediate causes of poverty and immediate child protection needs cannot be ignored. There is a pressing need for results. The pursuit of issues on multiple levels with different temporal horizons integrates the goal of sustainability into the programme strategy. The question of developing a separate strategy to make project achievements sustainable does not arise, because the systemic issues that threaten the sustainability of any project outcome are simultaneously analysed and addressed.

Deciding on the level on which to focus programme activities depends on the local context and on the issue to be addressed. It requires a thorough understanding of the causes and consequences of child poverty in the local context. It cannot be prescribed in a programme guide. The purpose of the programme guide is therefore to lay out a number of principles that should be applied in all programmes and a number of generic strategy elements that should be considered whenever a programme is being developed, as follows:

- **Right to a healthy start in life.** Expecting mothers, parents, infants and small children have access to quality maternal and child health care, nutrition and

early childhood care and development services and make optimal use of these services.

- **Right to sexual and reproductive health, including HIV prevention, care and treatment.** Adolescents and young people are able to develop their sexuality free of coercion, discrimination and violence. They have access to youth-friendly health, social and educational services to support their developing sexuality. There is universal access to quality HIV prevention, treatment, care and social support services for children and young people.

- **Right to education.** Children, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, religion or social status have access to safe, healthy and child-friendly learning environments where they are taught by competent teachers using learner-centred curriculums.

- **Right to water and improved sanitation.** Children and their communities have access to sufficient quantities of potable water and to hygienic sanitation. Governments accept the responsibility to create and maintain the necessary services to assure that nobody is excluded and that the access to water and sanitation is sustained and sustainable.

- **Right to an adequate standard of living.** Young people and families, especially families headed by women, are able to build income and assets and have access to appropriate and sustainable financial services. Children, and especially girls, are able to engage in activities leading to, and preparing for, sustainable livelihood.

- **Right to protection from all forms of violence and harm.** Children have access to prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration services to protect them from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment and exploitation, in all settings. At the same time they are mobilized and participate effectively in initiatives for their own protection.

- **Right to participate as citizens.** Children have the skills, capacity and opportunity to participate in decisions that affect them in their homes, communities, at school and at the level of their governments. Duty bearers acknowledge and support the participation of children in decision-making.

- **Right to protection and assistance in emergency situations.** Government and civil society agencies implement appropriate responses to assure the protection of children's rights in emergency situations and practice effective disaster risk management, environmental protection and peaceful conflict resolution to minimize the risks of emergencies.

In addition to the above programmatic themes, Plan International works through global campaigns:

- **"Universal birth registration".** The organization has been working on birth registration initiatives since 1998, helping millions of children to gain an official identity. It works with Governments and communities to ensure that all children are registered at birth. The campaign places emphasis on improved legislation along with its enforcement, assisting Governments to make birth registration a top priority, creating demand for birth registration among parents through community sensitization and mobilization, and targeting the most

vulnerable children. Its approach is rights-based and includes research into existing civil registration systems, awareness-raising, capacity-building and birth registration activities. The organization has helped to directly register over 40.6 million adults and children and has enabled a further 153 million people to get birth certificates through improvements in legislation and policy at the national level.

- **"Learn without fear".** Ending violence against children in schools is the goal of the new global campaign, Learn Without Fear. Research reveals that cruel and humiliating forms of psychological and physical punishment, gender-based violence and bullying remain a daily reality for millions of children around the world. The campaign targets three of the most common and damaging forms of violence in schools: corporal punishment, bullying and sexual abuse.
- **"Because I am a girl".** This campaign aims to fight gender inequality, promote girls' rights and lift millions of girls out of poverty. The organization produces one girl report each year in the run up to 2015, the target year for the Millennium Development Goals.

B. Significant changes in the organization

Plan International amended its by-laws on 13 November 2009. A United Nations advocacy and liaison office was opened in 2009 in Geneva, Switzerland.

II. Contribution of the organization to the work of the United Nations

The organization participated in a number of events and activities, including:

- Asian wide universal birth registration conferences (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)/Plan International), 2003 and 2007.
- International launches of the United Nations study on violence against children (UNICEF, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights), 2006.
- Fifth World Summit on Media for Children, 2007.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization expert meeting on the theme "Stopping violence in schools: what works?", 2007.
- European expert consultations in preparation for the World Congress III against sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, 2008.
- World Health Organization (WHO) expert consultation on health sector indicators for violence against children, 2008.
- Twentieth anniversary of the Convention of the Rights of the Child; Plan International was part of the organizing steering committee of the event, 2009.
- Inter-Agency Task Team, UNICEF, WHO, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, working group on civil registration; Plan International participated and contributed with its expertise on birth registration, 2007-2009.

- United Nations Climate Change Conference, held in Copenhagen; Plan International facilitated child participation, 2009.
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees standing committee; Plan International participated in the meeting and issued an oral statement on birth registration via International Council of Voluntary Agencies, 2010.
- Twelfth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice; Plan International presented its campaign "Learn without fear" as a method to combat violence in schools, 2010.
- Expert consultation on child sensitive counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms; Plan International participated and contributed with written examples of reporting mechanisms, 2010.

A. Participation in the forums of the United Nations

Commission on the Status of Women

Plan International has contributed yearly with written and oral statements, facilitated child participation and organized side events at sessions of Commission on the Status of Women since 2007. Its written statement to the fifty-fourth session of the Commission was entitled "Protecting boys and girls from harmful traditional practices".

General Assembly

Since 2006, Plan International has annually participated in the Third Committee session on the rights of the child and provided relevant programme experience in side events and meetings with United Nations partners and delegates. In 2009, Plan International, in cooperation with the permanent missions to the United Nations, UNICEF and other non-governmental organizations, organized a side event on child participation and a child panel on the same issue.

Plan International supported development of guidelines for the alternative care of children, which the General Assembly adopted in 2009. In October 2010, Plan International was invited to speak on the importance of child participation at a side event on the theme "Better data and research to address violence against children", organized by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, in cooperation with UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Human Rights Council

Plan International has submitted written statements to the Human Rights Council since 2006, both during special session events on violence against children and on children without parental care.

Annual Day of the Rights of the Child

Plan International contributed to written and oral statements at the 2008 and 2009 events of the Annual Day of the Rights of the Child. The organization was also a main speaker at the annual Day of the Rights of the Child (March 2010). It also

contributed to the agenda, gave input to the thematic resolution and provided a panellist. It was a main organizer of a joint side event on sexual violence against children, together with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and the Permanent Mission of Norway to the United Nations.

Third Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child

Plan International has been actively involved during 2009 and 2010 in the open-ended working group on the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, providing a communications and complaints procedure.

Committee on the Rights of the Child

As part of national coalitions on child rights issues, Plan International is actively taking part in developing complementary reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (40 countries). Some Plan offices have also taken part in supporting the development of State reports. On a few occasions Plan International has been invited to attend pre-sessions of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and has participated as an observer at the official sessions in Geneva. Plan International is actively working with the follow-up of the concluding observations. Plan International has provided substantial input to the Committee on the Rights of the Child Committee General Comment on article 12 (child participation), and the organization was involved in the process concerning General Comment on article 19 (violence against children).

B. Cooperation with United Nations bodies

Plan International is working closely with several United Nations agencies across the globe. Below are some examples of joint projects with United Nations agencies:

- UNICEF, research on *The Middle Way: Bridging the Gap Between Cambodian Culture and Children's Rights*, 2009; consultations with children on the Committee on the Rights of the Child periodical reporting in 2002 and 2008 in Sri Lanka.
- United Nations Population Fund, National information system; multi-indicators cluster survey produced for Guinea-Bissau.
- Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, participated in cluster groups in all disasters since tsunami.
- WHO, joint support for national vaccination campaign, 2005-2010, Guinea-Bissau.
- World Food Programme, support for girls' education and food security, 2005-2010, Guinea-Bissau.
- UNICEF and Plan International are two leading partners within the national task force for revitalizing birth and death registration in the country, 2005-2009, Uganda.

- UNICEF, joint partnership in the establishment of a national child helpline, 2009-onwards, Zambia.
- International Labour Organization/International Organization for Migration/ UNICEF, programme advisory group: working with the agencies on the human trafficking programme in conjunction with the Ministry of Home Affairs, 2010-2012, Zambia.
- UNICEF, Plan International is actively involved in the protection cluster, 2009-onwards, global.
- UNICEF, education cluster, 2009-onwards, global.

C. Haiti

Having sought the views of close to 1,000 children in Haiti, Plan International and UNICEF produced a joint report for Haiti's reconstruction plans. It was presented at a major conference at the United Nations in New York. The report, entitled "Anticipating the future: children and young people's voices in Haiti's post-disaster needs assessment", aimed to ensure that the wants and needs of young people are heard in Haiti's reconstruction process. The organization and UNICEF believe that children have a right to be consulted on issues that have a direct impact on their welfare and that their active participation in development processes is vital to achieving meaningful and long-term improvements in the livelihoods of communities.

D. Activities in line with the Millennium Development Goals

During the High-level Plenary Meeting of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals, Plan International, Save the Children, World Vision International and UNICEF organized a side event to ensure that children are at the centre of all efforts to achieve the Goals. The objective of the event was to engage the senior leadership of global child-focused organizations in a forward-looking discussion on achieving the Goals for children.